Preschool–Grade 6

Rehoboam and the Divided Kingdom

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Listen to wise counsel, and lead by serving. Rehoboam rejected wise counsel and answered roughly, and he lost most of the kingdom.
Bible passage: 1 Kings 12:1–17 and 12:19–20, read out loud by students.
Memory verse: "And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever." *1 Kings 12:7 (KJV)* and "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." *Proverbs 15:1 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read 1 Kings 11:26–43 and 12:1–24 and the teacher note at the end. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: Two Kinds of Advice (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation and two pieces of advice. Students vote for the wiser one and say why. 1) "Your team captain is upset with the team." A: "Show him who's boss." B: "Listen first, then talk." 2) "Your sister borrowed your sweater without asking." A: "Ask her kindly to ask next time." B: "Take her stuff and see how she likes it." 3) "You got put in charge of a group project." A: "Make everyone do it your way." B: "Ask what each person is good at." Ask: *Why is the wiser advice often harder to take?* Say: "A new king got two kinds of advice. Let's see which one he chose."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: 1 Kings 12:1–11. Old words:

- **Shechem** (12:1): the city where all Israel gathered; **Jeroboam the son of Nebat** (12:2): a man who had fled from Solomon to Egypt
- **congregation** (12:3): the whole gathering of the people
- **yoke… grievous** (12:4): a wooden bar on the necks of oxen; the people meant the hard, painful service Solomon put on them
- **consulted** (12:6): asked for advice; **counsel** (12:8): advice; **forsook**: turned away from
- **my little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins** (12:10): a boast that the new king would be far harder than his father
- **lade** (12:11): load; **chastised**: punished; **scorpions**: an even more painful punishment than whips

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Read out loud: 1 Kings 12:12–17. Old words:

- **roughly** (12:13): harshly; **hearkened not** (12:15): would not listen
- **the cause was from the LORD** (12:15): God had already said by the prophet Ahijah that Jeroboam would rule most of the tribes (1 Kings 11:29–31)
- **What portion have we in David?... to your tents, O Israel** (12:16): "We want no part in David's family as our kings. Everyone go home!"

Tell 12:18 in one sentence: the king sent Adoram, who was over the tribute, and the people killed him, so Rehoboam hurried to his chariot and fled to Jerusalem.
Read out loud: 1 Kings 12:19–20. Rebelled means turned against their king. Israel was split: Jeroboam ruled the northern tribes, and Judah alone followed the house of David.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The old men's counsel (12:7) says a leader who serves will be served. Where else does the Bible teach that? (Read Mark 10:42–45.)
2. Rehoboam went to the young men "that were grown up with him" (12:8). Why do we sometimes prefer advice from people who will tell us what we want to hear?
3. Read Proverbs 15:1. How does 1 Kings 12:13–16 show what "grievous words" do?
4. 12:15 says "the cause was from the LORD," yet Rehoboam chose his own answer. How can God be in charge while people still make real choices?
5. Proverbs 11:14 says, "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Who are the wise counsellors in your life? Do you ask them before big choices?
6. What is one place this week where you could lead by serving instead of by being tough?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in 1 Kings 12:7 and Proverbs 15:1: **spake** means spoke; **if thou wilt** means if you will; **thy** means your; **turneth away wrath** means calms anger; **grievous** means harsh and painful; **stir up** means start.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say 1 Kings 12:7 this week; keep working on Proverbs 15:1 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The old men told Rehoboam to be a servant to the people. Jesus 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Whose counsel do I usually listen to? Are they wise, or do they just agree with me?
2. Where was my last "rough answer"? What good words could I have said instead?
3. Write a short prayer asking God for a servant's heart and the wisdom to listen.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: before one hard conversation, ask a wise person for counsel, and answer softly (Proverbs 15:1).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, give us ears that listen to wise counsel and mouths that speak good words. Make us servants like Jesus, who came to serve and to give His life for us. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: what happened next. Rehoboam gathered the fighting men of Judah and Benjamin to win the kingdom back, but God sent word by Shemaiah: "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren… for this thing is from me," and they obeyed (1 Kings 12:21–24). It is outside today's passage; tell it only if students ask. Adoram's death (12:18) is told in one plain sentence; don't add detail.

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